

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SANA 02014 01 OF 02 260618Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 MCT-01 TRSE-00 OMB-01 IO-13 SSM-03
ACDA-07 /093 W

-----260629Z 050088 /14

R 261400Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1341
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AYEMBASSY LONDON 719
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SANA 2014

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT
SUBJECT: AL-HAMDI AND THE OPPOSITION

REFERENCE: SANA 1825

BEGIN SUMMARY: SENSE OF VULNERABILITY WHICH LINGERS OVER YAR GOVERNMENT IN AFTERMATH OF HAJRI ASSASSINATION GIVES SPECIAL DRAMA TO CONTINUING MANEUVERING BY SHAYKH AL-AHMAR AND YAR PRESIDENT AGAINST EACH OTHER. AL-HAMDI RETAINS INITIATIVE, PREPONDERANCE OF FORCE, BUT HE IS NOT AT EASE WITH HIS POSITION. AL-AHMAR SAID TO BE BITTER AFTER ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON HIM WHICH HE TRACES TO YAR GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. KEY POLITICAL GOAL OF YAR PRESIDENT IBRAHIM AL-HAMDI IS TO REMOVE HASHID SHAYKH ABDALLAH BIN HUSSAYN AL-AHMAR FROM SCENE. AL-HAMDI HAS REGAINED FROM USE OF FORCE TO ACHIEVE THIS AIM, PARTLY BECAUSE HE DOES NOT WANT LOSE SAUDI SUPPORT AND PARTLY BECAUSE HE DOES NOT WANT TO BE-

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PAGE 02 SANA 02014 01 OF 02 260618Z

COME EMBROILED IN BATTLES OF REVENGE WITH TRIBES. HE PREFERS MANEUVER, AND HAS PRESUMABLY OBTAINED SAUDI GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT TO A PLAN (REFTEL) WHICH WILL FIRST GET AL-AHMAR OUT OF COUNTRY FOR AWHILE AND THEN GIVE HIM MEANINGLESS POST IN GOVERNMENT. OVER LONGER RUN, AL-HAMDI APPEARS TO BE COUNTING ON DEVELOPMENT SERVICES AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS LIKE CONFERENCE FOR NEW

CONSTITUTION AND ELECTIONS TO STRENGTHEN HIM AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AT EXPENSE OF SHAYKHS.

2. LAST WEEK, IN EFFORT TO DETACH SOME SUPPORT FROM AL-AHMAR, AL-HAMDI SENT HIS OFFICE HEAD, ABDALLAH BARAKAT, WHO HAS RANK OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, TO BARAT IN THE NORTH. PARTY WENT BY PLANE, BUT HAD GOOD RECEPTION BY LOCAL DHU MUHAMMAD AND DHU HUSSAYN TRIBES. THESE TWO GROUPS, WHICH NOTORIOUSLY OPPORTUNISTIC, LIE TO NORTH AND EAST OF HASHID COUNTRY. BARAKAT CAME WITH FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS AND OTHER PROJECTS. SANA TV SHOWED MUCH FOOTAGE OF LOCAL SHAYKHS, TRIBESMEN ENTHUSIASTICALLY SURROUNDING BARAKAT AND WAVING REPUBLICAN FLAG. DESPITE THIS RECEPTION, HOWEVER, BARAKAT STUCK CLOSE TO BARAT, HOME TOWN OF ABDALLAH DARRIS, LONGTIME YAR GOVERNOR OF MARIB, THOROUGH-GOING REPUBLICAN AND ONE OF HEROS OF BATTLE OF SANA AGAINST ROYALISTS IN 1968. VISIT MAY BE MORE OF SANA MEDIA EVENT THAN ANYTHING ELSE, BUT SOMEONE TOOK IT SERIOUSLY ENOUGH TO TRY TO PLACE BOMB ABOARD BARAKAT'S AIRPLANE ON WAY BACK TO SANA. EVENT IN ANY CASE HAD TOUGH BARAKAT, A KHAULANI AND THUS MEMBER LIKE DHU HUSSAYN AND DHU MUHAMMAD OF LOOSE BAKIL CONFEDERATION, TRYING WITH SOME SUCCESS TO WORK IN COUNTRY WHICH NORMALLY BEHIND AL-AHMAR'S LINES.

3. AL-AHMAR HAS BEEN DOING SOME MANUEVERING OF HIS OWN IN THE MEANTIME. HE HAS BEEN TRAVELLING --SAADA, NORTHERN TIHAMA, AND PERHAPS ONCE IN LAST TWO MONTHS TO SAUDI ARABIA --- TO DENOUNCE PLANS FOR NEW CONSTITUTION
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PAGE 03 SANA 02014 01 OF 02 260618Z

AND ELECTIONS, LEFTISTS IN GOVERNMENT, RAPPROACHMENT WITH SOUTH YEMEN. ONE CONFERENCE HE HELD IN KHAMER LED TO DISTRIBUTION OF LARGE NUMBER OF PAMPHLETS DENOUNCING YARG. (AMONG OTHER THINGS, AL-AHMAR DENOUNCED AL-HAMDI REGIME AS CIA AGENT AND STOOGES OF IMPERIALISM.) SOME OF THESE WERE BROUGHT BACK TO SANA BY USIS ENGLISH STUDENT WHO NOMINATED BY MIN PUBLIC WORKS FOR US SCHOLARSHIP. STUDENT WAS CAUGHT AND IMPRISONED IN SANA. WHEN USIS LATER SENT LETTER TO MINISTER PUBLIC WORKS RE IMPORTANT TEFL EXAM FOR STUDENT, FORMIN ALKAASNAJ CALLED AMBASSADOR COMPLAINING THAT LETTER WAS "IRREGULAR".

4. CALL IS NOT VERY IMPORTANT EXCEPT FOR WHAT IT SAYS ABOUT SENSE OF UNEASINESS AND VULNERABILITY IN LEADING YAR FIGURES AFTER KILLING OF HAJRI. BODYGUARDS FOR OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN INCREASED AND ONE GOOD SOURCE TELLS US THAT PRESIDENT CONCEALS MOST OF HIS SCHEDULE AND HIS WHEREABOUTS NOWADAYS.

5. SPECULATION IN SANA KEEPS COMING ROUND TO QUESTION OF AL-AHMAR'S POWER AND INTENTIONS. WE HAVE HEARD OF ULTIMATUMS COMING IN LETTER FORM TO AL-HAMDI AND KNOW FOR SURE THAT EXCHANGES OF LETTERS CONTINUE BETWEEN THESE TWO RIVALS. WE DOUBT AL-AHMAR WILL ATTACK CENTRAL GOVERNMENT FORCES ALTHOUGH HE HAS THREATENED TO DO SO (IN VEILED TERMS) TO AMBASSADOR IN LETTER REPORTED SANA 1747. ATTACK IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DISCOUNT SINCE WE NOW HAVE SEVERAL CONFIRMING STORIES OF ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON AL-AHMAR ABOUT TWO MONTHS AGO, APPARENTLY JUST AFTER HAJRI DEATH. ASSAILANT, WHO ACTED ALONE, WAS PROMPTLY SHOT TO BITS BY AL-AHMAR BODYGUARDS SO HIS MOTIVES REMAIN UNKNOWN BUT AL-AHMAR ALMOST CERTAINLY BELIEVES GOVERNMENT SET UP THE HIT. (TRIBAL AND PERSONAL DISPUTES COULD JUST AS EASILY EXPLAIN THE ATTEMPT.) IN ANY CASE, AL-AHMAR'S DISLIKE FOR AL-HAMDI AND BITTERNESS ABOUT GOVERNMENT WHICH EXCLUDES HIM ARE GREAT.

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PAGE 04 SANA 02014 01 OF 02 260618Z

6. IF AL-AHMAR DOES ATTACK HE WILL ENGAGE ARMY THAT ACTS WHAT IS INCREASINGLY LIKE ANOTHER, NEW AND VERY POWERFUL TRIBE. BENEFITS SHOWERED ON THIS GROUP INCREASE ALL THE TIME; EXAMPLE IS PROJECT WHICH US COMPANY BIDDING ON TO BUILD 1000 HOUSING UNITS FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL IN SANA. ARMY ALSO APPEARS TO HAVE ASSABIYA OR IDENTITY WHICH LEADS IT SEEK REDRESS OR REVENGE IF ONE OF ITS OWN IS KILLED. THESE FACTORS, PLUS ITS RELATIVELY GREATER ABILITY IN COMBINED ARMS, MAKE IT MORE THAN MATCH IN OUR EYES FOR ATTACKING TRIBESMEN.

7. MOREOVER, AL-HAMDI IS IN MUCH BETTER POLITICAL POSITION THAN AL-AHMAR. WHATEVER ROLE ADEN MAY HAVE PLAYED IN HAJRI ASSASSINATION, THEY ARE NOT MAKING TROUBLES FOR AL-HAMDI AT TIME HE EMBROILED WITH NORTHERN TRIBES. WHATEVER LONG TERM STRATEGY --- OBLIGE AL-HANZI, INFILTRATE HIS GOVERNMENT, ORGANIZE CELLS CLANDESTINELY --- THEY ARE SUPPORTING HIM IN ANY FIGHT WITH TRADITIONALIST

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PAGE 01 SANA 02014 02 OF 02 260602Z

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

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SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 OMB-01 IO-13 MCT-01 SSM-03

ACDA-07 /093 W

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R 260400Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY SANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1342

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SANA 2014

FORCES. AL-HAMDI AT SAME TIME HAS EXCELLENT
RELATIONS WITH SAUDIS AND WITH US AND HAS KEPT SOVIETS
ON STRING. HE HAS MODEST ARAB WORLD REPUTATION FOR
PROGRESS, MODERNIZATION. AL-AHMAR,IOY CONTRAST, CAN ONLY
HUNKER DOWN IN HIS TRIBAL REDOUBT, RESPONDING AS BEST HE
CAN TO AL-HAMDI INITIATIVES ON INTERNATIONAL AND NATION-
AL SCENE. THIS TACTICAL DISADVANTAGE, PLUS INFERIORITY
HIS FORCES VIS-A-VIS ARMY, PUTS AL-HAMDI ICSSTRONG
POSITION FOR PERIOD THROUGH FALL AT LEAST, WHEN HE WILL
PROBABLY ORGANIZE NEW GOVERNMENT.
SCOTES

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Message Attributes

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